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Mennonite Women Leaders 'Round the World

Over the past couple of years, as I leafed through the pages of *Gospel Herald*, *The Mennonite* and other church periodicals, I began to see announcements, even stories, about women's ordinations in Mennonite churches in various countries around the world. We're witnessing a veritable outburst of such "firsts" these days — in Zaire, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Honduras and Brazil, to mention the ones that have come to my attention.

I realized I did not know these women. I've never been to a Mennonite World Conference, nor do international women leaders frequently pass through MCC offices. The announcements piqued my curiosity and I wanted to learn more about these pioneers. What are their interests? What have been their challenges? How do they combine family life and church work? Are they well accepted by their congregations and communities? How do they analyze their impact upon the church? What are the issues they foresee as pressing ones within the next decade or two for Mennonite women in their country?

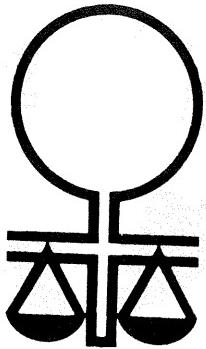
I thus set about trying to locate individuals willing to interview and write these pastors' stories. Although my initial idea was to concentrate on the first ordained Mennonite women in various parts of the world, I soon learned that the label "ordained" would exclude too many. It would exclude Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women who, while church founders and leaders, will likely never be ordained, by virtue of their educational level, their own preferences, others' attitudes or church prohibitions to their ordination.

The scope of the issue was therefore expanded to include women who are identified leaders in their national churches, whether officially ordained or not. But because there are many such women in the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches only a smattering of stories could be told here. They are undoubtedly representative of the joys and tribulations experienced by our Mennonite sisters who struggle in leadership positions worldwide.

What strikes me most about the stories is the firmness of faith and strong dedication and commitment exhibited in the face of oftentimes extraordinary odds - government persecution of churches, war, poverty, male domination and oppressive cultural attitudes and expectations. In Taiwan, Katherine Wu must balance cultural expectations of a daughter-in-law with her calling for church work. In Bolivia, Angela Opimi must work full time while attending school and serving on a pastoral team. She lacks time and energy to prepare sermons. At 66 years of age, Naka Gininda of Zimbabwe survived a thrashing by soldiers that many thought would kill her. In Nicaragua, Veronica Argueda has patiently stuck with the Mennonite church, even though she could have easily obtained funding for seminary study from Presbyterians.

As you read these stories, I'm sure you'll agree that the Spirit is moving vigorously in the lives of our Mennonite and Brethren in Christ sisters residing in places near and far from us in North America. Perhaps we're witnessing a renewal of the prophet Joel's vision: "Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:18).

Emily Will began to compile this issue while serving as women's concerns coordinator in MCC's Akron offices. She and her husband Mark and their two sons, Peter, 7, and Jason, 3, are now working in community development with the MCC Mexico program. They are members of Pilgrims Mennonite Church in Lancaster County, Pa.



"It's one thing to fill a role just because there are not men, and another to fill it because people think you are the right person."

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Ana Maria Reyes de Blandon, Nicaragua

by Ann Gruber Hershberger

Ana Maria Reyes de Blandon

and

Veronica Argueda

Discussing with Ana Maria Reyes and Veronica Argueda their lives and roles as leaders is a pleasant experience punctuated by frequent laughter. Ana Maria is a vivacious, friendly woman. Veronica is more serious and deliberative. But both women are able to see the lighter sides of what are often very difficult situations.

Perhaps a sense of humor is as important as serious reflection for leaders, especially females, in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan women have needed to learn to cope with earthquakes, a long, devastating war, the poverty of a "banana republic" and "machismo." These two women, each in her late 20s, combine realism and lightheartedness as they examine who they are and the future they hope to see.

Both are members of the Morazon Mennonite Church in Managua, Nicaragua's capital. Their church is part of the Fraternity Conference of Nicaraguan Evangelical Mennonites, one of three Mennonite and Brethren in Christ conferences in the country. No women are ordained or serve as pastors in any of these conferences.

Ana Maria Reyes has for 2½ years been the director of the Women's Ministries division of CEPAD. CEPAD is a Nicaraguan Protestant relief and development agency representing about 90 percent of the Protestant community. It also functions as a council of churches. The Women's Ministries division organizes church women in Nicaragua. The goal is to assist women in looking at their roles within their families, churches and communities in light of the Bible's example and teaching and also of the situation in Nicaragua today.

Veronica Argueda worked most recently as youth minister for the Fraternity Conference. She has also worked informally with various women's organizations within the Mennonite church. She has been a student and has served on the national board of SEMILLA, the Central America Anabaptist Extension Seminary program. She is now enrolled full time at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica. She is supported by the conference and by the sponsoring mission, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference of Canada, which has provided a scholarship.

Growing up in the same church, Veronica and Ana Maria share several common elements in their personal development as leaders. Supportive family members, confidence others expressed in them, the opportunity and encouragement to study and the absence of men in key roles during war emerge as major factors as they reflect on their journeys thus far.

"In my home I wasn't any less than my brother," Ana Maria states. "I wasn't his servant. We divided the work between all of us, including my father. He would always ask all of us our opinion in decision-making. Now I have

total support from Bayardo, my husband. But the people around him don't give him any support. They make fun of him, even his family does. He grew up in a very traditional home.

"His mother would die if she knew he washed clothes. She did everything for him," she adds with a twinkle in her eye. "I don't know how we managed to arrange our marriage this way, but we're in it together and we're in agreement on it." The couple easily shares the care of their 1-year-old daughter, Kenia.

While Veronica's father, on the other hand, "was very macho," her mother saw all of her children as equals. "Her viewpoint probably won out," Veronica says, "because my father was not with us throughout my entire childhood."

From an early age Veronica's family recognized her ability to interpret the Bible. "During Bible studies or family devotionals, I noticed that they would all wait to see what I would say and that my word was accepted. I don't really know how I gained that position. I think it helped me accept myself as a leader," she recalls.

Confidence expressed by others was also crucial to both women's development. For Ana Maria, it was a Sunday school superintendent who first affirmed her ability to teach. That provided a catalyst for others to see and affirm her gifts.

"Looking at my present work at CEPAD I don't quite know how I got here. I never had thought about something like this," Ana Maria relates. "But a friend, Joetta Handrich (former MCCer), suggested that I apply for the job. Again, she was a person who had confidence in me when I didn't even know what I could do. I only went to the interview to make her happy, because she was a friend of mine. I never thought that I would be accepted."

Veronica first saw her potential when two different college teachers offered her sports scholarships. Church friends also affirmed her and encouraged her to study. Although she didn't do so immediately, their confidence later helped her decide to attend seminary.

Her family's support was also crucial. My mother told me, "If you're going to work in the church you must prepare yourself... you must study, you must get a proper background." My sisters told me the same thing without having talked to each other. That helped me see the depth of their support. And they knew that my choosing this road

means I won't be able to contribute much to the family's finances.

Ana Maria and Veronica also acknowledge that military service for men opened doors for them. "We were only able to start the SEMILLA courses because of the military service. Previously there had been room only for the men, for pastors and other male leaders. Now there was room because a lot of the men were gone. We were both afraid and interested. And once we were in, we realized we could do it and we were even more interested," Ana Maria related.

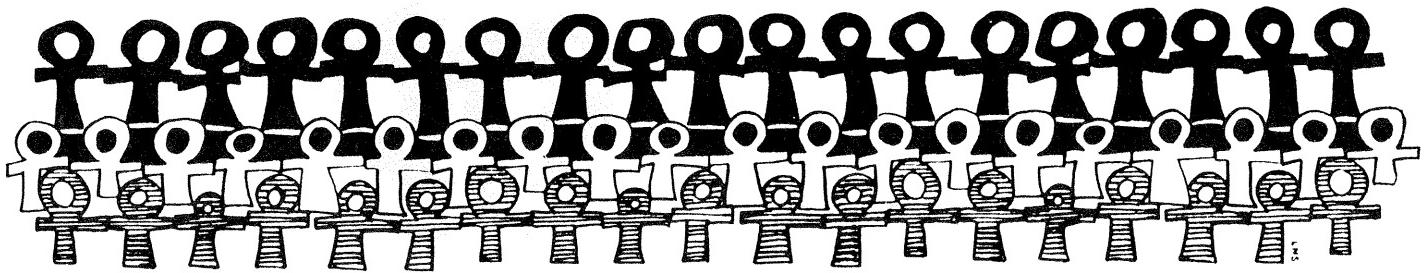
"We never received teaching in the church about the differences between the sexes," Ana Maria says. "What we did as women was accepted; no one ever prohibited our work. At the same time we knew implicitly what we could and couldn't do because of what we were asked to do. There weren't any women pastors, there weren't any women preaching. So it was more because having no role models and not being asked to do something, rather than being taught or told that you couldn't fill a particular role."

"Now that we have filled some of these roles it seems rather natural," she continues. "But it has been a quiet change. It has surprised even me! I never thought of myself as a leader. When I thought of a leader, I thought of someone like Moses. I have become a leader without even knowing it."

Since Morazan presently has no pastor, Ana Maria has been suggested by some as a possibility. But Veronica sees the timing as very important.



Veronica Argueda, Nicaragua



"It's one thing to fill a role just because there are not men, and another to fill it because people think you are the right person. The former could actually hurt the future of women in ministry," Veronica says.

Although both Veronica and Ana Maria believe that the conferences are in great need of change, they both see themselves working within church structures in the future. Veronica's commitment to working within church structures was evidenced as she struggled to find funding and support for her seminary studies. Although she could easily have found support from Presbyterian sources, she chose instead to work at getting the Mennonites on board. Her theology is Anabaptist and she believes that Anabaptists have an important role to play in shaping the society Nicaraguans hope to build. Veronica's patience and efforts bore fruit; she is now under contract with her conference's National Council. For each year that she studies, she will give a year of service to the conference.

Although Ana Maria loves the work of the church, she agrees with Veronica that it needs revolutionary change. "There needs to be more vision, changes of attitudes, less dependence and not so much this idea of letting happen what happens," Ana Maria says.

Nicaraguan women, too, will have to change if they hope to play a role in the church, the two young women say.

"We women are sometimes our own worst enemy here," Ana Maria asserts. "We lack self-confidence and the knowledge of who we are and what we can do. The great barrier for women are women."

Veronica adds that women need to be "more audacious, more tenacious and more assertive."

"We're not anywhere yet," she says. "We're on the path, though. I think the best thing we can do for ourselves personally and as role models for others is to keep relating to the church, as slow as it may seem, and above all to prepare ourselves by studying."

Ann Gruber Hershberger is serving a four-year MCC term as co-country director for Nicaragua with her husband Jim. They have two children, Sara, 3½, and Rachel, 2. Ann is on an extended leave from the nursing faculty at Eastern Mennonite College.

Beatriz Barrios
(translated from Spanish by Emily Will)

From Montevideo, Uruguay

My present role in the Uruguayan Mennonite Church is as a member of a congregation's pastoral team. This ministry includes pastoral counseling, visitation, women's Bible study and Sunday school teaching.

Last year when our pastor, Jaime Martin, died, my workload increased but I knew it would be for only a short period of time as plans were being made to add to the ministerial team.

I am single and currently live alone. This permits me to work more freely, as I am not burdened with daily home and family responsibilities.

My first contact with the evangelical church was through a children's Bible class held Saturday afternoons. With time I dedicated my life to Christ, I was baptized and I began to work in Sunday school. I soon found myself increasingly bound to the church through my participation in various church activities.

The pastor and other members encouraged me to serve on church committees and to assume leadership in some ministries—in Sunday school and youth work, for example. I was encouraged to go to seminary to prepare myself more thoroughly for ministry.

Even when God grants one the gift of and opens doors for church leadership, however, it isn't a question of telling others, "Here I am, now use me." It is the brothers who discern the gifts and delegate the responsibilities. When I've been in congregations and someone has opposed my preaching, I never take it as a personal attack—the problem isn't mine but rather theirs.



Beatriz Barrios, Uruguay

During the past five years of my serving on the pastoral team, the pastor supported me in all my congregational tasks. Once he said, "If anyone ever tries to criticize your ministerial role, tell them I am your pastor and that I have given you authority. Tell them to come and speak with me." That was a great help—it encouraged me to develop gifts and talents that out of fear I had hidden.

I have found brothers and sisters who have helped me in my leadership with counsel and criticism. We have grown together.

The Uruguayan church is in a process of change regarding leadership. We are praying, asking for the Lord's wisdom. My vision for our conference includes evangelization, and the discipleship and sending out of workers, without losing sight that we are all the family of God.

Angela Opimi, 22, is a member of the Santa Cruz congregation in Bolivia.

Angela Opimi, 22, is a member of the Santa Cruz congregation in Bolivia. She is part of a pastoral leadership team of three men and two women. Angela's father, Baltazer Opimi, has been a leader in the Los Tajibos Mennonite Church since its inception in the early 70s.

Angela left her rural village in her early teens and moved to Santa Cruz city in order to complete a high school education and increase her employment options. Most of the members, like Angela, are children or relatives of campesinos who were charter members of rural Mennonite congregations. The rural churches were begun in the early 1970s as a result of MCC volunteer presence.

Angela's father, Baltazer Opimi, has been a leader in the Los Tajibos Mennonite Church since its inception in the early 70s. When he left his position as lay catechist in the local Catholic church to identify with the emerging Mennonite congregation, he faced stiff persecution.

"When I was a small child," Angela recalls, "my father's own relatives took him to a nearby town where he was interrogated and accused of being a communist. It was right around Christmas time and I remember being very angry for what they did to him, especially since it meant he wouldn't be able to spend Christmas with us."

by Stephen "Tig" Intagliata

Angela Opimi

"Jesus' great commission was meant not just for men but for women as well. In God's eyes, we have the same potential as men."

For several years Baltazar was the only member of his family who attended the Mennonite church. A broken leg led to Angela's involvement in it. While bedridden, many members of the congregation, as well as Mennonite Board of Mission workers Steve and Debbie Fath, visited her. Their genuine concern and prayer support moved her to begin attending the church after her convalescence. Shortly thereafter, at the age of 15, Angela was baptized during a Bolivian Mennonite Church retreat.

Angela's participation in the Los Tajibos congregation was short-lived as she soon moved to Santa Cruz to finish high school. After three long years of perseverance and dedication, Angela became the first person in her family's history to earn a high school diploma in 1986.

New to Santa Cruz, Angela church-hopped for a while, then settled into a newly formed non-denominational church which had a large group of teen-agers and young adults. Angela was attracted by the excitement that their new faith had generated in them, reflected in emotionally charged worship services.

She felt quite comfortable in her new church until one Sunday when a leader spoke on women's role in the church. "He spoke degradingly of the position of women in the church, saying that we were only observers and that men were the only ones who could be leaders. He said that a woman's job was only to serve men, not the church."

"That made me pretty disillusioned about that group," Angela reflected. "I thought that if all Christians are children of God, then men and women should both be able to serve the church. Jesus' great commission was meant not just for men but for women as well. In God's eyes, we have the same potential as men."

Angela realized she could not remain in a church where she would not be able to fully develop and contribute her gifts. She left that group and began attending a new Mennonite congregation in the city, where she felt more openness to women's participation.

Indeed, Angela's gifts have blossomed within the congregation. Her special gifts in worship leading and children's ministry have strengthened and uplifted congregational life. She has worked alongside mission worker Helen Dueck to develop a week-long Vacation Bible School curriculum for use in the Bolivian Mennonite churches and has also helped train Sunday school teachers.

Angela has that rare ability to communicate her profound,

dynamic faith in an effective, yet non-threatening manner wherever she goes—whether visiting with family outside of their palm-thatched home in Los Tajibos or rubbing shoulders with high-society classmates at the executive secretary vocational school she attends in downtown Santa Cruz. She commands others' respect because she respects and values the uniqueness of each person she meets.

Angela is realistic about the challenges and barriers faced by church women in Bolivia. "It would be difficult for a woman to be an evangelist here, because women aren't respected in this society," she confesses, while adding emphatically, "But we need to work at breaking down the machismo that exists here, so women will stop feeling inferior to men!"



Angela Opimi, Bolivia

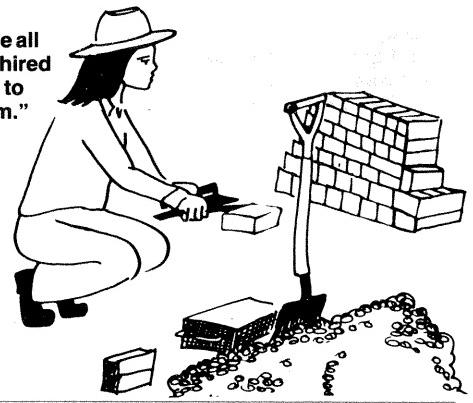
Angela's experience on the Santa Cruz church's pastoral team has shaped in her an Anabaptist view of servant leadership among the priesthood of all believers. "I need the church community to point out my faults so I can work on correcting them," she says. She then quotes a popular saying to illustrate her point: "No one is too rich that they cannot receive, nor too poor that they cannot give."

At the same time Angela expresses certain frustrations with a system in which those serving on the pastoral team often lack the time, education or personal resources to minister effectively. She is not the only pastoral team member who works full time while also attending school.

"When I'm asked to preach, I don't always have the time or energy to prepare adequately," she admits. "I usually

"No one is too rich that they cannot receive, nor too poor that they cannot give."

"Long ago the women made all the bricks themselves and hired a local woman contractor to build their church for them."



come away feeling like I haven't done a very good job. Because of this, I don't know if I have preaching gifts or not."

While Angela is supportive of the concept of pastoral leadership teams, she hopes that her church will someday have a pastor, "someone who can guide the congregation, not in a dominating or controlling manner but rather through servanthood." Asked if she would like to serve the church in that capacity someday, she responds with just a touch of hesitancy, "I would be open to being a pastor someday."

Her hesitancy is understandable in light of the many vocational opportunities that will be open to her once she has completed her executive secretary program. She is particularly interested in a writing career in which she would be able to express her viewpoints via editorials and commentaries. Her training will also open the door to careers in accounting, administration and computer programming.

No matter what path Angela Opimi chooses to take, she will creatively and powerfully testify to a gospel which is liberating to both men and women in the midst of an oppressive society. And the Bolivian Mennonite Church can be assured that her presence will have an important impact on the future growth of the Mennonite Church in Bolivia.

Tig Intagliata, his wife Karen and sons, Andrew, 4, and Lucas, 1, serve with the Mennonite Board of Missions in Santa Cruz. In addition to providing leadership training to the larger Bolivian Mennonite Church, they are engaged in church planting and community development together with MCC workers in a marginal barrio of Santa Cruz. Of Italian Roman Catholic background, Tig was first exposed to Mennonites when he joined Mennonite Voluntary Service after graduating from UCLA in 1978. He met Karen while in MVS.

by Mary Lou Cummings

Naka Gininda

Nkanyezi Ndlovu is known by everyone across the Zimbabwean Brethren in Christ Church as Naka Gininda (or Gininda's mother). In her late 70s, she is still full of spunk and pastors her tiny congregation at Empisini in the rural Gwai District.

"My daughter-in-law is my assistant pastor, and she is good! I just praise God because he gave me a Timothy! On Sundays when I'm worn out she preaches," says Naka Gininda with delight. Her mobile African face often widens in laughter and her eyes twinkle as she tells one anecdote after another about her long walk with God.

Finally, late in the afternoon, I suggest we walk out to a restaurant in urban Bulawayo. "You go and bring me something," she laughs. "I don't like to eat with a fork." And with that she stretches out on the floor to take a nap, uninhibited and secure in her role as aged leader.

It is not usual for women to lead Brethren in Christ congregations, and indeed, Gininda is not ordained. In the 1950s, however, white colonial powers were relocating black villages away from the fertile areas. Her family was one of those moved, and in the new area there were no missionaries or pastors. A friend suggested that they begin a Brethren in Christ group in his home; since he was divorced, he was not chosen to lead it. There were very few male believers.

"It seemed then that the church was mostly for women. One Sunday I was late; I sent my children on ahead. When I got to the service I found that they had chosen me to be pastor. I was afraid! I didn't have any qualities for leading or preaching. Oh, I prayed about it. In prayer, God told me that God would give me the message, that I was just the instrument. Then I was no longer afraid."

"In prayer, God told me that God would give me the message, that I was just the instrument. Then I was no longer afraid."

The church has always been small, made up mostly of some deeply committed women, their children and grandchildren. Recently two young men were baptized, and this gives Gininda hope that men are becoming more open to the gospel message. She also worries about the problems—including young girls who become pregnant or fall into sin. This is a perennial problem.

Long ago the women made all the bricks themselves and hired a local woman contractor to build their church for them. The roof, rafters, door and foundation were gifts from individual missionaries and the BIC church.

"So it was our own building and we were really proud of it," Gininda remembers. "When the war came along in the 70s, guerrillas came around and harassed us. Government soldiers threatened to burn it down if we kept worshipping there. They didn't want us meeting. So we all met for worship in my kitchen instead." (Kitchens are often lean-to's under thatch or shade branches.)

One Sunday the soldiers came to Naka Gininda's kitchen looking for her son because some guerrilla fighters had been seen hanging around his home during a party. They were doubly irritated to find the son gone and a group of Christians there with Bibles and hymnals. They took Naka Gininda, a 66-year-old widow, and began to beat her with a thick stick.

This was one of several times in her life when she was filled with God's spirit. With each stroke she praised God's name in her heart, aware as never before of God's presence. The soldiers left her, blood running from her eyes, ears, nose and mouth. No one thought she would survive.

The soldiers took away all the Christians and a younger son of Gininda's. For two days she grieved, knowing that the worst could happen. Her eyes clotted with blood, and hardly able to move, her spirit cried out to God for mercy for those taken. On Wednesday, the Spirit filled her again and she heard God's voice, assuring her that God was in control. She relaxed and believed. The next day the prisoners returned home, amazed at the care they had received.

Gininda was born in 1910 to Christian parents. She was a strong-willed child, who learned, for example, that she could steal meat out of the cooking pot if she tipped it to look as if the cat had done it. But when she was converted at age 16, her pastor told her that she had to go to her mother and ask forgiveness for her childhood wrongs. That

• Women in Leadership

• **Marjorie Reimer Ediger** was licensed to the ministry at First Church, Reedley, Calif. She has accepted positions as director of Community Care Services and assistant to the activities director at Sierra View Homes.

• **Eleanor Epp-Stobbe** was ordained to pastoral ministry in the fall at Hamilton (Ontario) Church.

• **Linford Martin and Elaine Horner Martin** were ordained as pastors of Kingview Mennonite Church, Scottdale, Pa. They were both licensed in 1985.

• **Brian Bauman and Nancy Brubaker** were installed as the pastoral team at First Church, Reedley, Calif.

• **June Alliman Yoder** was ordained by Indiana-Michigan Conference for service as a teacher at AMBS and as an itinerant preacher.

was hard, for her mother had a bad temper! But she did it, and the two shook hands in forgiveness.

"That Brethren in Christ policy of confessing one's sins kept me out of a lot of trouble after that," she laughs.

She married a Christian man and had nine children, two of whom died in childhood. After some years, however, his faith lapsed and he drank heavily. For 12 years there was a second wife in the home, and beatings were frequent. Love had disappeared. During these years Gininda continued her work as an evangelist, praying with people in their homes. Her husband did not hinder her; he was sympathetic to Christianity but could not commit himself until the hours before his death in 1973.

Bishop Stephen Ndlovu says, "God has used Naka Gininda. She has a strong faith. It never wavers! When she prays, she actually visualizes God. It is as if she is in the same room with God. Some of these older women are strong—full of God's spirit. Because of their sufferings God has made himself known to them. When she preaches, she uses a lot of Scripture. She knows the Scripture and is good at preaching."



Naka Gininda, Zimbabwe

The following small story illustrates the direct line which exists between the aged preacher-evangelist and her God:

Another denomination came to her area and asked her to help them with an evangelistic campaign, visiting house to house. "We all believe in one God; our differences don't matter," she thought, and readily agreed to help.

- **Roger and Cynthia Neufeld Smith** began as co-pastors at Southern Hills Church, Topeka, Kan.
- **Pam Tolmay** was ordained in recognition of her past service as co-pastor of Walnut Hill Chapel (Goshen, Ind.) and her upcoming service as a co-pastor with her husband, Jock, in Ontario.
- **Amanda and Gamaliel Falla** are co-pastors at Comunidad de Fe, Chicago.
- **Bob and Enid Schlonger** were installed as pastors of Millersburg (Ohio) Mennonite Church in the summer.
- **The Reverend Barbara C. Harris** was elected as the first female bishop of the Episcopal Church. Her election will cause some controversy in the worldwide communion of Anglican churches which has not endorsed the concept of women bishops. In a brief

Three weeks later, however, the leader challenged her. "You will answer for these people in your church who will never get to heaven," he told her. He was not necessarily opposed to her leadership as a woman but in general felt that Brethren in Christ theology was inadequate.

She went home upset. What if it were true? So, she says, "I put out the fleece. I said, 'God, here's what I want you to do! I want you to show me if my church is not correct. This morning I am going to ring my church bell as usual. If I am incorrect, I want you to stop everyone from coming.'

"That Sunday I went and rang my bell. Ninety people showed up. The highest we had ever had before was 50. Well, I knew God had spoken to me. I got up and gave my testimony and I told those people, you and I, we are going to heaven together!"

Mary Lou Cummings travelled in East Africa during 1986-87 with her husband, Bob, and children, Chris, 14, and Lisen, 7. She collected stories about Mennonite and BIC women to be used by local African women's groups. She currently resides in Quakertown, Pa.

statement after her election the Rev. Harris said her election is "far broader than any attention that might be focused on me as an individual."

by Verney Unruh

Katherine Wu

Katherine Wu, first woman pastor in the Mennonite Church in Taiwan, is a third-generation Christian. Her grandfather pastored a large church in mainland China. Army service took Katherine's father to Taiwan in 1946, where he afterwards took a job teaching school in a remote area on the east coast. There he met a young woman, led her to Christ and married her.

Katherine is one of three children; she has an older and a younger brother. As a child, her parents' strong faith and dedication impressed her. The family had regular devotions. The closest church was several miles away. To reach it took more than two hours by bicycle and foot; they had to cross three rivers. Katherine remembers her father often carrying her to church.

When Katherine was in the second grade the family moved to Hualien. They soon joined the Meilun Mennonite Church, drawn to the friendliness and warmth of the pastor and his wife. They are still members. Mr. Wu is an elder, Mrs. Wu is a deacon.

Katherine's parents dedicated their children to the Lord and hoped that at least one of the sons would become a pastor. Since there were no women pastors at the time, they wanted Katherine to be a pastor's wife. They offered to send her to Bible college after high school, and she enrolled in Holy Light Theological College, a Free Methodist school in Kaoshiung.

A fourth-year woman student recommended to Katherine that she enroll in the theological course. Up until then only men had studied theology, and they were surprised to see a woman in their classes. Some of them laughed and told her she'd never be able to pass—theological studies were for men! This upset Katherine. Determination and hard work proved them wrong. She graduated with her class in June 1980.



• Five hundred women from 56 nations agreed that the world's progress is dependent on equal partnership between men and women in tackling the major issues. Their voices were raised at the first International Women's Conference on Global Peace in Dallas, Texas.

women. Their natural gifts for birthing and nurturing can be a significant factor in the understanding of the planet's political and economic problems.

The women heard that hope for world peace in the 21st century may rest with

At that time Katherine did not plan to enter the ministry. She had hoped to meet and marry a ministerial student, but that had not happened. She took a job with the Far East Broadcasting Association producing Gospel tapes for broadcast to the mainland. She prepared short messages, sang, answered letters and did secretarial work.

In the meantime a young man, Harold Lue, was interested in her. The two had grown up in the Meilun Church and were school classmates. He had finished university and was working in a trading company in Taipei. Although they had been close friends, Katherine still hoped to be a pastor's wife and felt she could not marry him.

Her ideas changed, however, when the Mennonite Christian Hospital Board invited Harold to Hualien to work in hospital administration. Through prayer and others' encouragement, Katherine came to see that she could serve the Lord as a hospital administrator's wife. The couple were married in December 1982. Though her husband's family name is Lue, according to Chinese custom Katherine retains her maiden name, Wu.

When Katherine returned to Hualien, Timothy Liau, then pastor of the Meilun church, asked her to help with Sunday school, youth and other meetings. He also asked her to preach occasionally. When Timothy moved later in the year, the church council invited Katherine to become the pastor.

This was an unexpected offer; Katherine was not sure she wanted to pastor her home church. But after prayerful discernment with her family and others, she accepted and was installed in August 1983. The birth of their first child, Jessica, posed some limitations to Katherine's pastoral work, but she continued in it with the support of the church council and others. She was granted an 18-month leave of absence in 1985-1986 to accompany her husband to Arizona, where he did further study in hospital administration.

The Meilun Mennonite Church was started in 1957 by missionaries W.C. and Mathilda Voth and Marie Regier. From a small beginning it has grown to a membership of nearly 100, about 65 percent of whom are women. The church council is composed of three elders and four deacons, elected for three-year terms, and the pastor. In the past some women have been elected as deacons. Katherine is satisfied with this organization, and has felt strong support from the council.

Of her many pastoral duties, Katherine enjoys the counseling most. Although she has come to enjoy preparing and delivering sermons, at first she felt inadequate to handle what she thought was an awesome responsibility. Her greatest joy is in seeing people come to know Christ and in witnessing believers' growth in faith and commitment to the church.

What are the struggles as a woman pastor in Taiwan? Initially Katherine felt a lack of support from many, particularly from the older women. Some of them still find it hard to accept her. Katherine feels this is not so much because she is a woman but because it is her home church. They saw her grow up when her family and in-laws were very poor. Now that they are better off and her husband has a high position in the hospital, Katherine feels some are jealous; this is very painful for her.

Katherine has not felt much support from church conference leaders. Although she has more than met the requirements for ordination, they have not yet proposed it.



Katherine Wu, Taiwan

She struggles constantly with family obligations. According to old Chinese custom, Katherine and Harold live with his parents. Her role as a full-time pastor often conflicts with traditional Chinese expectations of a daughter-in-law. Normally the daughter-in-law is responsible for cooking, keeping house, washing clothes and other duties, a full-time job in itself. Obviously Katherine cannot meet such high

- Margaret Loewen Reimer began as acting editor and manager of Mennonite Reporter for one year.
- Katrina J. Hunsberger, Ulster, Pa. received \$250 for first place in this year's C. Henry Smith Oratorical Contest. Her essay is titled "A Christian Response to Racism."
- Colleen Braun Janzen is beginning a position as music teacher at Columbia Bible College, Clearbrook, British Columbia.
- Catherine R. Mumaw, Associate Professor at Oregon State University, directed an international training program in the summer on "Technology for Improving Family Economic Well-Being" at the University of Minnesota.
- The sixty participants in the training program included home economics leaders from 30 different countries. Special attention was given to the issues of the impact of technology on problems related to water, waste, energy, pollution, housing, food processing, cookstoves and income generation.
- Ethel Metzler, M.A., therapist and team leader at Family Counseling Services, Elkhart, Ind., has been awarded certification as an approved supervisor for marriage and family therapists by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She received supervisory training at Purdue University.

expectations, sometimes resulting in family tension and criticism from neighbors and some church members.

Because Harold is employed full time, he is not available during the day to help care for their 4-year-old daughter. Katherine usually takes Jessica with her to the church as well as on visitation or to meetings. Several evening meetings a week also takes a toll on family togetherness.

In spite of the struggles, Katherine has no regrets about heeding the call to be a pastor. The joys and blessings have outweighed the pain and struggles. If her daughter feels called to the ministry she will support her and she encourages other women to consider pastoral service. Her only word of counsel is, "Be sure that God is calling you. Without that undergirding conviction, it will overwhelm you."

Note: By the time this article is in print, Katherine may no longer be in active pastoral ministry. She and Harold have had a second child, and have decided that Katherine should withdraw from the ministry for a few years to devote more time to family responsibilities. She hopes to continue to volunteer her service to the church, as time is available.

Verney Unruh and his wife Belva served with the General Conference in Japan from 1951-1966 and in Taiwan from 1979-1988. They currently reside in Kansas and are members of First Mennonite Church in Newton.

background, if I have my facts straight, and choosing that as a leader is pretty radical for this conservative country church!

It's a while since you talked about women and aging. This summer we celebrated my grandmother Anna Born's 100th birthday in Altona, Manitoba. After a program of songs, poems, and sermon by her 12 children and their families, she got up to the podium and praised God for his care and delivered a powerful call to anyone in the family who had not yet put his/her trust in Jesus to do so, so that we might not be separated in eternity. If this is what getting old means, it holds no terrors for her granddaughters and great-granddaughters.

Keep up the good work.

—Anna L. Schroeder, Brandon, Manitoba

- I always look forward to each issue of *Report* and read it carefully.

In the issue on Domestic Help (No. 79) I was particularly impressed with Jane Andres' interview with Lurline Grey. As a frequent visitor and occasional resident of Jamaica MCC unit leader houses over a 13-year period, I learned to know Lurline as a friend. This interview appears to be a very honest representation of Lurline's views. Thank you for sharing this very personal point of view from a culture where domestic helpers have a long standing and important role in society, even though it has been inadequately rewarded.

—Catherine R. Mumaw, Corvallis, Oregon

We encourage and invite letters from readers that speak to the issues raised and the perspectives presented in Report. Although we try to print all letters, some may be shortened or edited to fit available space. All letters must be signed, although writers may request to have their names withheld.

Letters

- They say that as long as no one says anything, you must be doing a good job. My collection of *Report* goes back to 1980, so obviously I have enjoyed getting, reading, and rereading them.

But (just in case not one from Boissevain has written) you do occasionally slip up. In your issue #79, July-August, in the "Women in Church Ministry" column, your information is at fault. The Reverend Valery Izicki is actually a large, bearded MALE. He is of Polish-Jewish

the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns. The committee, formed in 1973, believes that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committee strives to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures in which men and women can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committee on Women's Concerns.

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- **Illustrations in this issue were drawn by Teresa Pankratz of Chicago. Please do not reproduce without permission.**

- **Some graphics used from rural women in action and feminist logo's published by Int'l Women's Tribune Centre, New York, N.Y. 10017.**

News and Verbs

- Dorothy Yoder Nyce traveled to India in May and June with 11 other women to study women's issues in that country. Yoder Nyce was impressed with women's cooperative efforts and activism for social change. "Every woman we spoke to was actively involved in working toward justice; working toward improvement for women... What struck me the most was the contrast between the individualism among western women who work for their own upgrading and Indian women who work for the masses who are in need."

Yoder Nyce is the 1988-89 C. Henry Smith Peace Lecturer. She plans to integrate her recent study and travel in the lectures she will give at Goshen College and Bluffton College in the spring.

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U.S. residents may send subscriptions to the above address. Canadian residents may send subscriptions to MCC Canada, 134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9. A donation of \$10.00 per year per subscription is suggested.

- Esther Epp-Tiessen, a former member of CWC, is gathering stories on women and cancer for an upcoming issue of Report. She is interested in hearing how cancer has affected the lives of women who have (or have had) cancer themselves, who have (or have had) a family member with cancer, or who work with persons with cancer as caregivers. Stories should range in length from 600-800 words, and should reach Esther at 41 Brubacher St., Kitchener, Ontario, N2H 2V8 by February 1, 1989.
- Amid the scenes of the Moscow Summit was an international group of women called **Women for a Meaningful Summit**. For the first time in four Summits the U.S. government recognized the group, who were able to present their Women's Peace Platform which underscores the WMS principle that war is obsolete; that the existence of nuclear and conventional weapons is not a source of security; and that "we are not enemies of one another—our real enemies are hunger, disease, racism, poverty, inequality, injustice, and violence.

Women for a Meaningful Summit, founded in 1985, is a coalition of 200 women's groups committed to a just and peaceful world based on common security and focused on the Summits. Mary Jane Patterson, Presbyterian Church, USA, and Linda Weber, Church of the Brethren, represent the churches on the National Board. "At all conferences, summit meetings, and other major negotiations where the fate of the earth is on the bargaining table, we will be present," says the organization.



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